



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

PO BOX 202801  
HELENA MT 59620-2801

Linda McCulloch  
Secretary of State

*Comm Serv*

HB 130: Vote-By-Mail  
House State Administration, Rm 455  
January 19, 2011 @ 8 a.m.  
Secretary of State Linda McCulloch's Testimony

EXHIBIT # 2  
DATE Jan 19, 2011  
130

- Good morning Mr. Chair, members of the committee. For the record, I am Linda McCulloch, Montana Secretary of State. Thank you Representative Ingraham for agreeing to introduce this comprehensive legislation.
- I am here this morning in support of House Bill 130, a bill that will increase voter participation, enhance voter protection, and save taxpayer money.
- Vote-By-Mail elections have been discussed in this legislative body for the past few sessions. The proponents and opponents have swayed from one side of the aisle to the other...and then back again.
- One thing that has not swayed has been the public's support for Vote-By-Mail elections. In the past 10 years, absentee voting has increased statewide by 32%. In November's General Election, 76% of voters in Yellowstone County cast an absentee ballot.
- There are many reasons why an increasing number of Montana voters prefer Vote-By-Mail. Convenience and ballot security top the list.
- Vote-By-Mail increases voter participation by allowing more time, more flexibility and more ways to vote. Voters will have 25 days to vote their ballot before Election Day; and they will have four ways to do so: By mail, or Official and secure Drop box, or Staffed Place of Deposit on Election Day, or In person at the County Elections Office.
- This is the option for you, if you are someone like me who likes to vote at the polling place. You can take your ballot into the county election office, walk into a voting booth, mark your ballot and turn it in when you leave the voting booth.
- Vote-By-Mail gives voters more time to review and consider complex issues on the ballot before casting their vote, which means more ballots may be submitted complete. It's not unusual for voters to vote for the top few races on a ballot and leave legislative races and initiatives blank – either because they did not know the issues and candidates, or they did not have time to finish the ballot.
- Vote-By-Mail provides time for every voter to be an informed voter, thus securing the fairness and integrity of each election.

- Vote-By-Mail enhances voter protection by requiring eligibility and signature verifications – a process that makes Vote-By-Mail more secure and more transparent than polling place elections.
  1. Here's how: Each voter must affirm their eligibility on the signature envelope.
  2. Election officials will receive technical training on signature verification.
  3. Ballots will be issued from the statewide voter file, thus eliminating any possibility that a voter may vote more than one ballot.
- Drop Boxes and Staffed Places of Deposit are an important part of all-mail-ballot elections. Strict uniform security standards will be in place for all Drop Box sites.
- Drop Boxes will be secured with locks and tamper-proof seals that are recorded by number on a seal log kept by each Election Administrator. Drop Boxes will be anchored or chained to an immovable object, and placed in a highly visible public location. Only designated individuals may transport ballots from a Drop Box. These individuals must present ID and a form signed by the Election Administrator to the proper facility of authority before transporting the ballots.
- Vote-By-Mail complements the enhancements my office has made to ensure an open, transparent and secure election process. Voters can now access their voter registration and ballot status information online through My Voter Page on the Secretary of State's website. This includes the address to where their absentee ballot was mailed, and the status of their voted ballot.
- This high level of transparency works as assurance to the public of the integrity of the registration and voting process in Montana.
- Vote-By-Mail saves taxpayer money by eliminating the need for polling places, poll workers, and other administrative costs. Based on 2008 election costs, counties could save an estimated \$2 million each federal election cycle.
- When you couple such significant savings with increased voter participation and protection, Vote-By-Mail is the clear choice for Montana.
- Montanans can be confident this bill ensures every opportunity to vote privately and conveniently. This Legislature can be confident this bill was drafted with bipartisan support from the state, county election administrators, advocacy groups and representation on behalf of Montana's Sovereign Tribal Nations.
- I have to thank the members of our working group who tackled the vote-by-mail issues. Their work on this bill really is the way Legislative work should be done...people who don't start out with a common belief, sitting down together, talking and working out something that all Montanans can benefit from. It doesn't get any better than this. I am so proud of their work and this bill.

- **Vote-By-Mail will work in Montana.**
  - Remember: Voters are already moving in this direction.
  - We currently have record absentee turnouts, and yet taxpayers still must pay for polling place locations and the costs associated with them.
- **Let's eliminate those costs by putting the right technology and rules in place; and let's make it easier for every eligible Montanan to participate in every election.**
- **I urge you to protect our Democracy and the integrity of Montana elections by voting "yes" for HB 130. Thank you for your time this morning.**